

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (previously presented) A method, implemented on a gaming system including at least one gaming machine, of utilizing a voucher in the gaming system comprising the steps of:

- issuing at least one cash voucher having a particular cash value associated therewith;
- accepting by said at least one gaming machine said at least one cash voucher;
- crediting said particular cash value to a player of said at least one gaming machine;
- generating a record regarding said at least one accepted cash voucher;
- storing said at least one cash voucher in said at least one gaming machine;
- retrieving one or more cash vouchers from said at least one gaming machine; and
- comparing information from said one or more retrieved cash vouchers to information regarding said at least one accepted cash voucher contained in said record.

2. (previously presented) The method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said at least one gaming machine is arranged to accept bill monies, and further including the steps of:

- accepting by said at least one gaming machine at least one bill money; and
- crediting the value of said at least one bill money to a player of said at least one gaming machine.

3. (previously presented) The method in accordance with Claim 2, further including the steps of:

- retrieving said at least one bill money and said at least one cash voucher from said at least one gaming machine; and
- sorting said at least one cash voucher from said at least one bill money.

4. (previously presented) The method in accordance with Claim 1, further including the step of:

reading information from said at least one cash voucher after said at least one cash voucher is retrieved from said at least one gaming machine.

5. (previously presented) The method in accordance with Claim 4 wherein said step of reading comprises scanning a bar code associated with said cash voucher.

6. (previously presented) The method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein multiple cash vouchers are accepted by said at least one gaming machine and said step of comparing comprises comparing the values of all cash vouchers accepted by said at least one gaming machine to the values of the cash vouchers retrieved from the machine.

7. (previously presented) The method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein each of said at least one accepted cash voucher and each of said one or more retrieved cash vouchers has a unique identifying element and said comparing step comprises comparing said identifying element of each retrieved cash voucher against identification information stored in said record of said at least one accepted cash voucher.

8. (previously presented) The method in accordance with Claim 1, further including the step of:

reconciling said at least one accepted cash voucher with said one or more retrieved cash vouchers.

9. (previously presented) In a gaming system including at least one gaming machine arranged to accept both bill monies and cash vouchers and store accepted bill monies and cash vouchers with one another, a soft count system for reconciling cash vouchers accepted by said at least one gaming machine with cash vouchers retrieved by said at least one gaming machine comprising:

at least one data storage element for storing data regarding accepted cash vouchers, including a value of said accepted cash vouchers;

a sorting mechanism arranged to sort bill monies and cash vouchers retrieved from said at least one gaming machine; and

a scanner for reading information associated with said cash vouchers.

10. (original) The gaming system in accordance with Claim 9 wherein said sorting mechanism includes a high speed scanner.

11. (previously presented) The gaming system in accordance with Claim 9 wherein said sorting mechanism includes a bill sorter and a reject area and said sorting mechanism is arranged to sort said cash vouchers into said reject area.

12. (previously presented) The gaming system in accordance with Claim 9 wherein said soft count system includes means for generating an image of at least one of said cash vouchers.

13. (original) The gaming system in accordance with Claim 9 wherein said soft count system includes at least one hand-held scanner.

14. (previously presented) A method, implemented on a gaming system including at least one gaming machine, of reconciling cash vouchers and bill monies accepted by the gaming machine comprising:

- crediting automatically on said gaming machine a value associated with a cash voucher or bill money accepted by said gaming machine;
- retrieving intermingled cash vouchers and bill monies which have been credited;
- sorting said cash vouchers from said bill monies; and
- determining if a total value of said retrieved cash vouchers and bill monies comprises the total value credited for said accepted cash vouchers and bill monies.

15. (previously presented) The method in accordance with Claim 14, further including:

- storing said cash vouchers and bill monies after said crediting.

16. (previously presented) The method in accordance with Claim 14, further including the step of:

- scanning said cash vouchers to obtain value information associated with each cash voucher.

17. (previously presented) A system including at least one gaming machine in which a user is permitted to make payment in the form of bill monies or cash vouchers comprising:

- at least one container for storing accepted bill monies and cash vouchers with one another;
- at least one apparatus adapted to sort said cash vouchers from said bill monies retrieved from said at least one container;

at least one apparatus adapted to scan said cash vouchers to obtain value and identification information regarding each cash voucher; and
a computing device adapted to determine whether the value of said sorted and scanned cash vouchers is the same as the value of cash vouchers accepted to said container.

18. (previously presented) The system in accordance with Claim 17 wherein a single apparatus is adapted to sort said cash vouchers and bill monies and scan said cash vouchers.

19. (previously presented) The system in accordance with Claim 17, wherein said gaming machine is arranged to accept bill monies and cash vouchers and store said bill monies and cash vouchers in said at least one container.

20. (previously presented) The system in accordance with Claim 17 wherein at least one of said cash vouchers has a bar code printed thereon and said value and identification information for said at least one of said cash vouchers is associated with said bar code.

21. (original) The system in accordance with Claim 20 wherein said at least one apparatus adapted to scan comprises a laser-beam scanner for reading said bar code.

22. (previously presented) The system in accordance with Claim 17 wherein said computing device comprises a computer having information stored regarding the value of said accepted cash vouchers.

23-24. (canceled)

25. (new) A method of using tangible vouchers in a gaming system, comprising:

issuing a first tangible voucher having a first particular cash value associated therewith and a first bar code displayed thereupon, said first bar code including at least a first validation code for said first tangible voucher;

creating a first host record of said issuance of said first tangible voucher at a central host location, said first host record including said first validation code;

starting a time period for a gaming machine in said gaming system, said gaming machine being adapted to accept wagers, play games based on said wagers, and grant monetary awards based on the results of said games;

accepting said first tangible voucher by said gaming machine;

reading said first bar code of said first tangible voucher with an automated validating mechanism at said gaming machine;

determining said first validation code from said reading of said first bar code at said gaming machine;

sending said first validation code from said gaming machine to said central host, said central host being located at a remote location from said gaming machine;

comparing said first validation code sent from said gaming machine with said first validation code stored in said first host record at said central host;

validating said first tangible voucher within said gaming machine as a result of a match between said first validation codes;

crediting said first particular cash value to a credit meter at said gaming machine;

generating a first acceptance record regarding the acceptance and validation of said first tangible voucher at said gaming machine;

permitting a monetary wager to be made at said gaming machine with credit from said first particular cash value credited to said credit meter;

playing a game based on said monetary wager at said gaming machine;
granting a monetary award based on an outcome of said game;
storing said first tangible voucher in a storage box within said gaming machine;
accepting a bill money by said gaming machine;
crediting the cash value of said bill money to said credit meter;
generating a bill acceptance record regarding the acceptance of said bill money at said gaming machine;
storing said bill money in said storage box along with said first tangible voucher;
issuing a second tangible voucher having a second particular cash value associated therewith and a second bar code displayed thereupon, said second bar code including at least a second validation code for said second tangible voucher;
creating a second host record of said issuance of said second tangible voucher at said central host location, said second host record including said second validation code;
accepting said second tangible voucher by said gaming machine;
reading said second bar code of said second tangible voucher with said automated validating mechanism at said gaming machine;
determining said second validation code from said reading of said second bar code at said gaming machine;
sending said second validation code from said gaming machine to said central host;
comparing said second validation code sent from said gaming machine with said second validation code stored in said second host record at said central host;
validating said second tangible voucher within said gaming machine as a result of a match between said second validation codes;
crediting said second particular cash value to said credit meter;

generating a second acceptance record regarding the acceptance and validation of said second tangible voucher at said gaming machine;

storing said second tangible voucher in said storage box in intermingled fashion with said bill money and said first tangible voucher;

ending said time period for said gaming machine;

retrieving all tangible vouchers and bill monies from said storage box, including said first tangible voucher, said second tangible voucher and said bill money;

sorting said first tangible voucher and second tangible voucher from said bill money;

comparing information from said first bar code on said first tangible voucher to said first acceptance record;

comparing information from said bill money to said bill acceptance record;

comparing information from said second bar code on said second tangible voucher to said second acceptance record; and

comparing a total value of all retrieved tangible vouchers and bill monies to a total value of all tangible vouchers and bill monies credited at said gaming machine during said time period.

26. (new) The method in accordance with Claim 25, wherein said first tangible voucher comprises a printed ticket.